

A VILLAGE FESTIVAL

When the Metropolitan was suitably attired he took his silver-headed stick and we set out in a little procession towards the cathedral church of St. Demetrius, which towers above the wretched cottages that surround it like some great vessel among her attendant rags. The Metropolitan and myself were preceded by the parish priest, while well ahead there danced a certain Anargyris, whose daily joy and responsibility it is to remove straying cattle and goats from the Bishop's path, to wave to their feet the loungers on doorsteps, the coffee drinkers and those who play *triatras* in their leafy retreats; finally, to silence the village's solitary gramophone and other profane noises. As our little procession hove in sight, the bell-ringer, stationed among his charges at the summit of the campanile, shattered the slumbers of all who had immoderately prolonged their siesta, and we made our way up the steps into the narthex of a surprisingly lofty church. [346]

After evensong we returned, somewhat less formally, to the Bishop's cottage for supper—a simple meal of potatoes and fruit (by reason of the fast) which was shared by his two nephews, both of them orphans. I slept that night at an inn adjoining the cottage-metropolis. [485]

The following morning, it being Sunday, we were in church from a quarter to seven until a little after ten. The liturgy ended, the colonel in charge of the local garrison drove us out in his jeep to the village of Granitsa, high on the wooded hills above the plateau, where we sat under a great oak while the villagers came to greet their father in God and brought little gifts of fruit and honey. [796]

At evensong in the cathedral that evening, while the cantors sang of:

Things creeping innumerable,
Both small and great beasts,

a dormouse appeared from behind the cupboard where the liturgical books were stored, and sat most devoutly before the beautiful doors for a considerable space. The Bishop told me afterwards that it was the first mouse—the colloquial *pantiker*, with a twinkle at my use of the classical word—he had seen in the church during the four years that had elapsed since his consecration as Metropolitan of the smallest and poorest see of Greece.

The old diocese of Nevrokopi had included 120 communities. After the first Balkan war, however, it had been partitioned, and ninety of its villages as well as the town of Nevrokopi now lie within Bulgarian [795]

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957

EH1 Greece EH1
Paleo Corinthos

[Villages of the Plains].

THE VILLAGES

111

higher than wages for unskilled labor in Athens. It is these wage rates, of course, that have attracted new settlers from the hills; but the fact that such labor is seasonal, lasting for only about four months in the year, means that families depending entirely on wage work are often in very hard straits.

The unparalleled prosperity that the years since 1953 have brought to the farmers of Corinth has been accompanied by the development of a number of nonagricultural occupations within the village. Several new stores and two new coffee houses have come into existence as well as the fancy restaurant for tourists. A number of persons also make a living as tourist guides. The richest men in the village, however, are merchants who have organized the delivery of tomatoes and other vegetables to the Athens market; they employ truck drivers, not all of whom live in the village. The two cooperatives employ, between them, a full-time, professionally trained secretary. The museum has a small staff of caretakers and curators. The village school had 210 pupils in 1956 and employed three teachers. A priest officiates in a handsome new church, which the villagers have built out of their own resources. Old Corinth, in other words, is developing into a small town, and ceasing to be a mere village. If the plan, only talked about in 1956, for establishing a small canning factory to preserve tomatoes is ever realized, the transition to a town status will become definite.

Nevertheless, from one point of view, the community has so far remained thoroughly traditional in its social organization. The substantial farmers of Old Corinth continue to adhere to age-old patterns of family life. When it comes time for their children to marry, the daughters are dowered, partly with money and partly with a share of crop land, vineyard and olive grove; and sons, similarly, inherit their portion of the parental farm. Clearly, if there are more than two children — and this is almost universally the case — the new generation will have to

An Ingenious Device

ashore, put off from the wharf. With some difficulty we ○○○ weathered the hubbub. The usual formalities with passport officials, and excisemen caused a little unavoidable delay, but at last I secured a carriage, my suitcases were put in, gratuities were distributed to all and sundry, and off I drove through the sun-bathed streets of Corfu town.

I found comfortable quarters at the Pension Suisse ¹/_A 485 ● for the equivalent of 6s. per day, including board. The whole place was scrupulously clean. It was, however, tucked away amongst tall houses and had no outlook or view such as the Hotel Angleterre boasts and, incidentally, charges for. Compared with those in which I had been staying of late, my quarters were luxurious in the extreme, and I immediately became the complete tourist. The proprietors spoke French and English; indeed, I found one or other of these languages spoken in all the shops, hotels and cafés in the town. The intending visitor need therefore feel no anxiety on the score of language. Money need not 453 worry him either, as here, ¹/_A unlike Albania, there are banks where circular notes and letters of credit can be cashed—though the process is exceedingly slow, the banking officials and clerks apparently being overcome by the lassitude induced by the climate.

The currency is Greek and consists chiefly of very dirty 436 half-notes of five and ten drachmæ—actual value, of course, two-and-a-half and five. The observant traveller will remark that it is the left portion of the note which is in circulation and never the right, the right half having had to be, at some